

1-26-16

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1. My name is Jim Egged, and I am a retired firefighter and state certified hazardous materials technician.
2. Freedom of information and the right to know is essential to not only those who are engaged in responding to emergency situations but to those who live and work in an area where threats to their safety loom as well.
3. Therefore, transparency is of the utmost importance between the citizens and those they have chosen to represent them.
4. In light of recent transgressions by a state appointed authority, not an elected representative, resulting in adverse effects on the health of thousands of vulnerable citizens, promoting transparency should be foremost among your concerns.
5. This would further promote good will between the governing and the governed. House Bill 4540, amending the State of Michigan's Freedom of Information Act is a serious threat to that relationship.
6. Firefighters and other first responders, of course, have a federally mandated right to know as do employees of any given company. However, in community right to know individual citizens have to exert a maximum effort in order to obtain information on any potential hazards that may be a threat to them and their community.
7. With firefighter right to know we can rest assured that the community officials will never let anything happen to the folks who depend upon and trust them right? Besides, emergency response is a retroactive solution.

8      Unfortunately, given the manner in which Michigan law is written, the ability that cities, counties, townships, and villages have to regulate activities within their jurisdictions vary. Many of the "critical energy infrastructure information" this bill is designed to protect runs through communities that are limited on what they can and cannot do with respect to regulating commerce.

9      Obtaining information on the ability of aging infrastructure of this type to function in a safe manner is a necessity for those who wish to avert a catastrophe.

10     I understand the premise of this House Bill. However, it is obvious to even the most casual observer that these amendments will be used as subterfuge to protect the inadequacies of this "critical energy infrastructure information" so that the operators do not have to be forced to make capital expenditures to either repair or replace equipment.

11     It can be argued that this is not the case, but the timing of the introduction of this bill, being on the heels of a less than satisfactory response drill held by Enbridge, the United States Coast Guard and other agencies in the Straits of Mackinac, simulating a leak in Enbridge's Pipeline 5, is somewhat suspect.

12     In addition when the Pipeline Task Force commissioned by the Governor and Attorney General did not produce the desired results, only admonishing Enbridge, not even chastising them for their lack of cooperation with both the state and federal governments. The result was to provide Enbridge with more

time to do whatever. This is time. / my dear trusted public officials, that a 63 year old pipeline may not have.

13 Of course there are new "critical energy infrastructure" projects that may meet the safety criterion set forth by current statutes, but when these safety features are shrouded in secrecy how can we as the impacted citizens be sure that this is in fact the case?

14 These amendments may be well intended, but terrorists do not use the Freedom of Information Act as part of their planning procedures, do they? To quote an old aphorism, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions". Just look at recent events in Flint.

15 When a piece of legislation such as this allows a company to protect the inadequacies of their operations from public scrutiny and disaster strikes, the appearance of impropriety will be called into question and answers will have to be provided.

16 As well intended as this may be, I cannot help but quote another aphorism, "A word to the wise is sufficient." I would not want this to come back to haunt the State of Michigan.

